

81 - Music and Movement = Social-Emotional Development

Original Air Date: 8/30/23

Purpose: The purpose of the transcripts is to provide readers and listeners with a written version of each episode of the UAGC Center for Early Childhood Education's Early Childhood Chatter Podcast so they can follow along with the audio content. www.uagc.edu/ece-center/chatter-podcast

Audience: Current Active & Enrolled Students

Episode Transcript

Host Dr. Shipley: Hello, everyone, and welcome to Early Childhood Chatter with Dr. Shipley and Dr. Heald. And as always, we will be uploading a new episode every other week on Wednesdays.

Host Dr. Heald: Twice a month, we'll come to you with a 10-minute professional development with new ideas for you to try. Don't forget to subscribe to the podcast for notifications about future episodes.

Today, we are so excited...thrilled to have Nick Young with us. Welcome, Nick.

Nick Young: Hello, I'm so happy to be here, wonderful to hear your voices.

Host Dr. Heald: We are thrilled to have you. So, Nick is an early childhood music and movement specialist with over 30 years of experience leading interactive music and movement activities in preschool classrooms.

Nick is the owner of Young Music Company, Mobile Preschool Music Program, excuse me, and Play Motion Music, which is a multimedia interactive music and movement online curriculum program. Nick is a frequent presenter and workshop leader at the Early Childhood Education Conference. We are thrilled to have him this year, and he also has worked in agencies and programs around the country.

He is sharing our time here with us today. Welcome, Nick.

Nick Young: Thank you so much. It's wonderful to be here.

Host Dr. Shipley: Nick, I'm so excited you're here with us. You do amazing things. So the title of your session is Music and Movement Equals Social Emotional Development, and I know that you have so many cool resources, so I want to know why this one is near and dear to your heart.

Nick Young: Well, this really combines two things that I think are really important. I have a huge background in early childhood music education.

You know, I've been leading music groups in preschool classrooms for about 30 years now, which is crazy to think about, but then I recently connected with a gal named Tanya Hayes, who's actually presenting at the conference coming up in July, I believe, and she's an expert in childhood development and social and emotional literacy and things like that. So she and I met at a Head Start conference in Las Vegas, and we decided we needed to collaborate, and so we kind of married our two expertise together and came up with a whole new module of curriculum that combines interactive music and movement and social and emotional development. So, I wrote a bunch of new songs and things like that that are around that, and I have been using them in my program, and I believe she's been using those resources as well.

So when I was asked to give the opening keynote for the conference coming up, I said, I think the teachers that attend the conference are really going to find this valuable, and I can share about my/the interactive music and movement that I do, which I also did in an earlier podcast with you guys, and then how that can also really lead to give us tools that we can use to help children to catch up on their social and emotional literacy, which we all know has been severely impeded and delayed because of the pandemic and other factors. So yeah, I'm excited to talk about this.

Host Dr. Shipley: Nick, I love that. Look at us getting the best of the best, you and Tanya, and you both come and present for us. You're going to be at our conference, and everyone, we will give a little bit of information at the end of this because this podcast is going to air after our conference, and so I'm super excited because you will want to go and watch those sessions.

Host Dr. Heald: Yeah: . And I think, Nick, you gave us a great starting point. So our demographic of listeners on the podcast is often educators, early childhood educators, administrators, leaders, and also families. So I think you really gave a great starting point for us.

How are we able to utilize music and movement in our early childhood environments, whether we are a teacher, educator, administrator, leader, or family member?

Nick Young: Thank you so much for that question. You just listed like all my favorite people in the world.

Host Dr. Heald: I mean, not that I didn't give you a basic task.

Nick Young: Well, I am so privileged because I get to work with children who are in early childhood, teaching classes, whether it's in person or online. I do a lot of work with Head Start around the country on Zoom. And so I get to work with the children, which of course is my favorite, but then I also get to work with early childhood educators who I just have so much admiration for.

I started out as a preschool teacher myself at my mom's family childcare in Long Beach many years ago. And, you know, that's why I noticed how much the children enjoyed when I bring my guitar in and sing. And so that's kind of led to everything that I do.

And then also parents and families of children who are in early childhood. And the wonderful thing about music and movement is that it's something that can, it can be adapted and used and enjoyed in all different environments. So, it can be in the preschool classroom.

It can be at home, at your family's conferences, workshops. All those things are great venues for bringing in the interactive music and movement. And the way that this also ties in with social and emotional literacy and development, you know, I think people that are early childhood educators or work in that field, even parents, kind of have an intuitive grasp of how this is connected.

But, you know, when we're doing the interactive music and movement with the children, their, you know, the language, their language development is really accelerated because, you know, we internalize and learn language much better, I believe, when it's in the context of music and rhythm and melody than we do if it's just someone talking at us. So our language development is really enhanced. And then, you know, it's a wonderful kind of a laboratory in an environment.

An interactive music and movement session, whether it's at home or in the classroom, is a place of accelerated social and emotional learning and development because children are interacting with their peers. They're interacting with their teachers, with their parents in this positive, really intuitive and natural, organic way. And it just presents a lot of opportunities for positive face-to-face interactions, cooperation, problem solving. You know, children who are moving their bodies, maybe they're crawling like a spider, hopping like a frog, jumping like, you know, flying like a butterfly with all of their friends in this group space. Maybe it's your large group space in your classroom or maybe it's your home, but the children are moving together. And in order to do that, they really enjoy it. But they also need to have, to be able to develop a certain level of impulse control, be able to be in control of their bodies so that they can take care of their friends, take care of themselves.

And we use different positive techniques and tools that are in the context of music and movement to help to kind of spur that along and give them choices that they get to make about, you know, as they're learning about their social, emotional, their, you know, like I said, impulse control, things like that. And I have to also list, it's been shown through

scientific studies that children who are involved in music activities, their cognitive development is enhanced, their academic performance is enhanced, their gross and fine motor skills are really enhanced. The list goes on and on.

So it's really a wonderful tool and thing to really prioritize, whether it's at home in the classroom, any environment. It's really something that is worth your time and effort to bring that in and make it something that you do on a regular basis with children.

Host Dr. Shipley: So, Nick, I agree with you 100% on all of it. So I taught pre-K, kindergarten, even up to third grade. I had music in my classroom when they entered. There were two different times that I had structured music activities going on.

We sang and danced. It was very, very important to me. And you could tell that the children really enjoyed it.

And I feel like those things that you just stated, my students were above other students who didn't have that. So we know that teachers have so much on their plates right now. And some of them are going to say this might be an added burden.

And I can tell you right now it's not. It's something that you plan into your daily schedule. So it's not an added burden.

But we do know teachers are overwhelmed by behavior and responsibilities. So give us some tips and tricks on how teachers can add this into their daily schedule or into their daily teaching that you've seen work that's not an extra thing that they have to do.

Nick Young: What a great question. I know, especially working Head Start teachers, any early childhood educator who's really making an effort to do a really wonderful job with their students has so much going on, so many things that they're responsible for. And the idea of layering on another thing in their inbox can be like, they may even say, yeah, this sounds great, but I'm never going to get around to it. I think, you know, whatever degree of effort and time you're able to put in is going to be good.

So like say it's just, well, I put on some music during a certain time of the day and maybe the children dance or something like that. That's great and that's a kind of a good place to get started.

But what I really want to advocate is for an intentional approach to early childhood music and movement and making it something that you enjoy with your students or your children at home I think on a daily basis, you know, or weekly is fine, too. But, you know, the more forethought you can put into it, the better quality of experience that you're going to have and that the children are going to have.

And, you know, there are certain things we want to have criteria that we want to use when we're selecting the music that we're going to present and the way that we're going to present it. So so I feel like there's there's a lot of different music that's designed for children, that's created for children. But some music, even maybe the majority of music that you'll find if you just look it up on your phone or YouTube or something, doesn't have that interactive element necessarily.

Maybe it's something that's just a nice, pretty song. A lot of those songs are great, but they don't really achieve what we're trying to do with the interactive element of it. So we want to have songs that are directing us to move our bodies.

I talk about in my program, directed movement and imaginative movement. So like a song where I was talking about before, like where they're moving their bodies like different animals, crawling like a spider, hopping like a frog, flying like a butterfly. I think of that as an imaginative movement song because they really have the opportunity to think about, they can kind of be creative in how they move.

If they if we just say jump like a frog, there's a lot of different ways you can jump like a frog. And I'm not telling you spot down and then jump up high. I'm saying you kind of get to do that or a directed movement song where it specifically

says tap your foot, wiggle your shoulders, turn around, jump up, clap your hands, then that's directing you more specifically.

So those are the kinds of songs you want to select when you're doing music time and you want to make sure that they offer an opportunity for the children to enjoy the movement that the song is talking about. And you as a teacher or a parent are leading the group. So you're modeling the movements along with your students.

So if the song is saying tap your foot, you're tapping your foot and you're showing the children. Here's how I tap my foot. Show me how you tap your foot.

And so we want the adult who's involved to be engaged with the activity. Not just I'm going to put on a CD or put on Spotify or something and put it on the playlist and walk away and do something else. I am involved with the group.

I am as involved as the children are and I've put some thought into what music I'm going to be presenting and offering. And I'm not like having to say, okay, we just did a song. Now, wait a minute or two while I go find another song and get my papers and get my notes.

You know, you want to kind of have one thing flows into the next. When I do my music groups, I do 30 minutes. And so, from the beginning of that time to the end, there's no pauses. It's, I'm really keeping the flow going and active and I'm enthusiastic and that's how I get the best results as far as keeping the children engaged.

And then when you're talking about, you know, children with challenging classroom behaviors, you know, that's a whole other thing we can talk about related to that in the context of music and movement. And the opportunities that this kind of activity affords us to help children to develop those social skills.

Host Dr. Heald: And I think Nick to your point, you're also integrating amazing content in there and you can do it in a cross-curricular manner. I mean, your example of, you know, jumping like a frog. And, you know, even though it's imaginative, we're bringing a level of expressive and receptive vocabulary to our children.

So I can see areas where we can also utilize some of those kindergarten readiness skills in a very, you know, engaging manner. So it's not like, like you said, it's not above and beyond what you're already doing. It's integrating in so that we can better learn some of those content areas also in an engaging way for the children.

And actually, they like it even better. But I'm going to be devil's advocate here for a moment. And I'm going to say, I cannot sing. I cannot carry a tune in a bushel basket. I'm not sure my movements are, I don't know if I want to share those with others. And I believe a lot of our listeners might feel the same way.

So how can we unzip our level of comfort and just be, you know, in the moment, realizing that it might not be what we look or sound like, but it's something so much greater.

Nick Young: Stephanie, thank you so much for bringing that up. I get that a lot from teachers that I work with.

You know, I think there's a lot of things to talk about there. Well, first of all, the children do not care if you have a wonderful singing voice. They just want to be singing and they want to sing with you.

Somebody that I did a workshop with a while back brought this up and they had such a good point to make about it. And I want to just share that is: children learn about how to be an adult from the adults that they're with. So if a child is in a classroom where all they ever, the only hearing they ever hear, the only singing is on the stereo with something pre-recorded, then they're going to think, oh, singing is something that I listen to. It's not something that I do. But if I am in a classroom where the teacher is singing all day long, then the children are going to learn that singing is something that I do and it's something that I get to enjoy with people that I care about and something that I get to take into the rest of my life.

So it doesn't matter if you are a wonderful singer or not, just the fact that you are singing, I would even say, you know, I mean, I think what some, if you're like this fantastic singer and you're like, hey, listen to me sing, then the children might get a little intimidated by that.

And they may not be as inclined to join in. But if you're just an average singer or even a below average singer, then they're going to be like, hey, I can do this. This is very accessible to me.

So that's a wonderful point to bring up. And I just think that's a gift that we want to share. Even people that don't, aren't like have a lot of practice singing.

I think everybody enjoys singing. And, you know, it's something that we should definitely enjoy and share with our students for sure.

Host Dr. Heald: Yeah. And I love that you say that because even though in my mind, I might know that, you know, I'm the winner of American Idol in my car.

And honestly, my students probably think that also. So I love that you say that. Nick, can you wind us down with three takeaways for our listeners?

Nick Young: Yes.

Okay. So I, things that we've been talking about already, you know, I think all classrooms should be, I don't want to say should, because it's not like I'm telling you, you have to do this, but why not take advantage of this wonderful tool that we think of as interactive music and movement, something that you can get started with in a really basic way. And as you continue to present it to your students over time, you know, you're going to learn, you're going to develop.

Why not bring this into your classroom, bring it into your home? You know, when you're home with your children, this is a wonderful thing. Get them away from those screens, put on some music, sing and dance with your, with your children and your students, and then, you know, get out the shakers and drums and scrapers and triangles and things like that. So that's, that's one thing I want to challenge teachers and parents to do.

Another takeaway I would say is that something you brought up earlier, which is, you know, teachers might feel that it is overwhelming and they're already so busy, how could they possibly consider adding another element to their, to their day, to their responsibilities? But I think maybe when we're thinking of it in that way, we're coming at it from the wrong perspective. This is really something that's going to make your life easier, you know, and music and movement is, these songs are something that you can use in your classroom in some really practical ways. You can use music to transition your students from one part of their day to another part of their day.

They're coming in off the playground. If they're going outside, if they're starting to have snack time, if they're coming to large group time, all these different things, we can cue them by playing certain songs, singing certain songs that help them, remind them about this, this thing that it's, you know, the change that's happening, the transition that's happening in their day.

And then number three, I would say, you know, coming back to the, the connection with social and emotional literacy. You know, my friend, Tanya...Tanya Hayes, she helped me to understand the emotions that all children should be literate in by age five.

Those are happy, sad, angry, afraid, surprised, and disgusted. And we can use music to help children to develop that literacy. You know, I have some songs in my, in my program that are asking children to express emotions with their facial expressions.

So it's like, show me how your face looks when you feel happy, show me how your face looks when you feel sad or angry or afraid. And so, you know, music is, it's a, it's a great opportunity for us to help children develop these important skills that are really going to be impactful in their life success and readiness, their relationship, quality of their relationships,

their success in their profession as they grow up, get older. So it's just a win-win all around, you know, plus it gets, gives us an opportunity to have fun and enjoy interacting with our children and our students, which I think is really the reason that we got into this profession in the first place.

Host Dr. Shipley: A hundred percent. You're exactly right. And the more engaged and the more fun we can have, the more that children learn and want to come into our classroom.

So leaving our listeners with one challenge, Nick, what is it?

Nick Young: Okay. My challenge is coming back to that again, is take some time every day or every week, if you want to lead an interactive music and movement session with your students or your children at home, you know, plan it out. Say, you know, on Thursday at 11 o'clock, we're going to do music and movement time.

And I've prepared some music that I'm all ready to present. I, you know, listen to it beforehand. I'm going to know how I'm going to be modeling the movements that are, I'm going to be showing off to the students and have some instruments, have some shakers, drums and scrapers and things ready to go.

And you can use the instruments with the children to play along with songs, to tell musical stories, to learn how to read and play rhythm sounds when you get more advanced. So, so yeah, see how it goes. Take a little time.

And, you know, if it could be a large group time every day, you could do a little music time with the students. And, and don't feel like you have to do this in any specific, certain way. It's adaptable to your teaching style and your specific student population.

You know, every group is going to be different and they're going to have different needs. So pay attention to the group. See how they're responding and engaging with the activities that you're presenting and adapt as you go along to make sure you're kind of presenting what's appropriate at any given moment, but I'm excited for everyone listening to take up this challenge and see how it goes and enjoy it.

Host Dr. Shipley: Yes. Yes, definitely. You have done an awesome job. We always love having you here.

I told you at the end, I would share a little bit about the conference. Go to our show bio and we will have the link to our conference there.

There you can see Nick present. He is our keynote this year. You can also see his friend Tanya present.

So Nick, thank you. And we will be talking to you soon. Wonderful.

Nick Young: Thank you so much. Talk to you soon.

Host Dr. Heald: Thanks, Nick.